

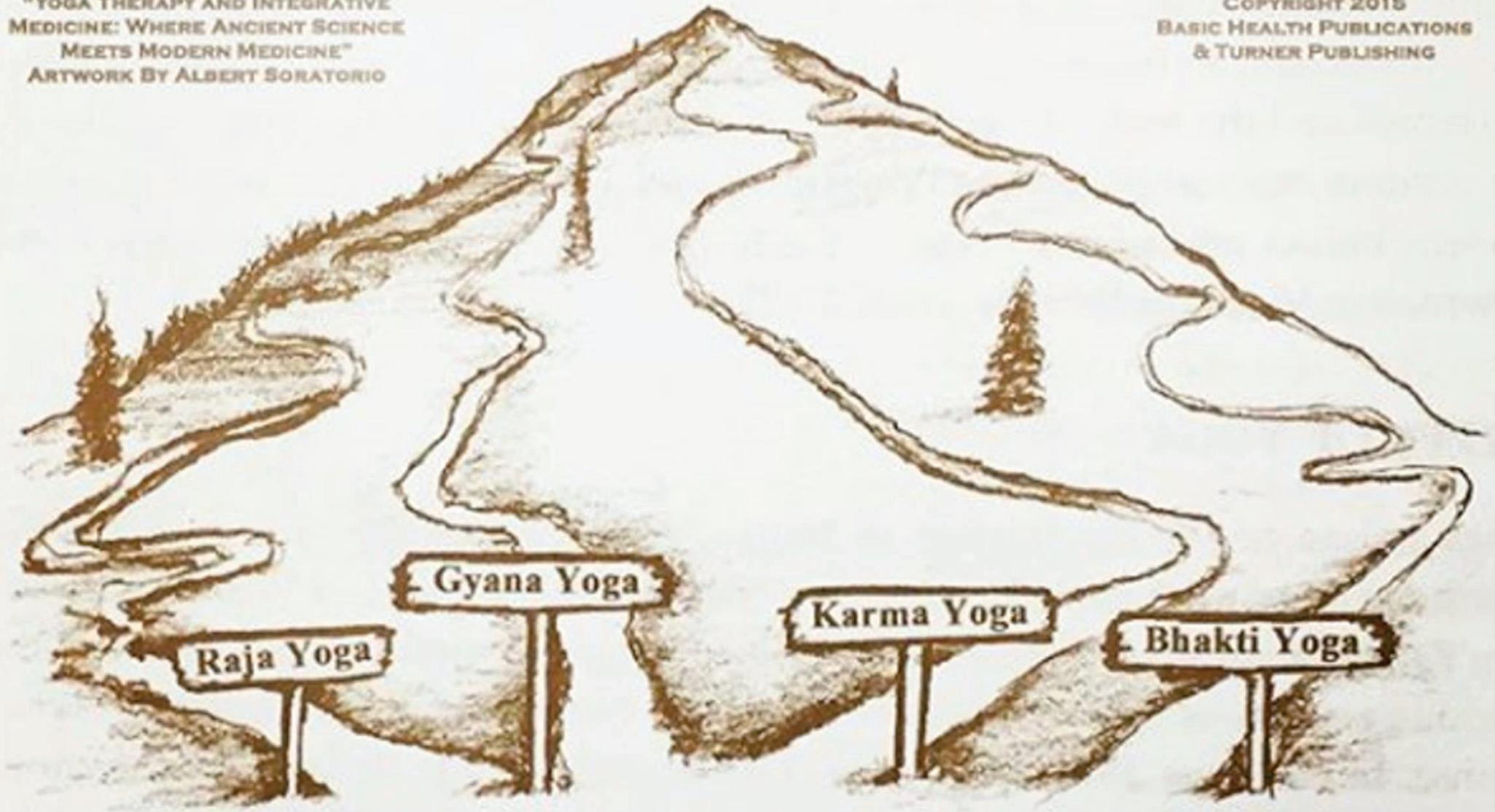
**USC Dornsife**  
*Physical Education  
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# USC Yoga TT: Introduction To Yoga

Dr. Eden Goldman, D.C., C-IAYT, E-RYT500, YACEP

**"YOGA THERAPY AND INTEGRATIVE  
MEDICINE: WHERE ANCIENT SCIENCE  
MEETS MODERN MEDICINE"  
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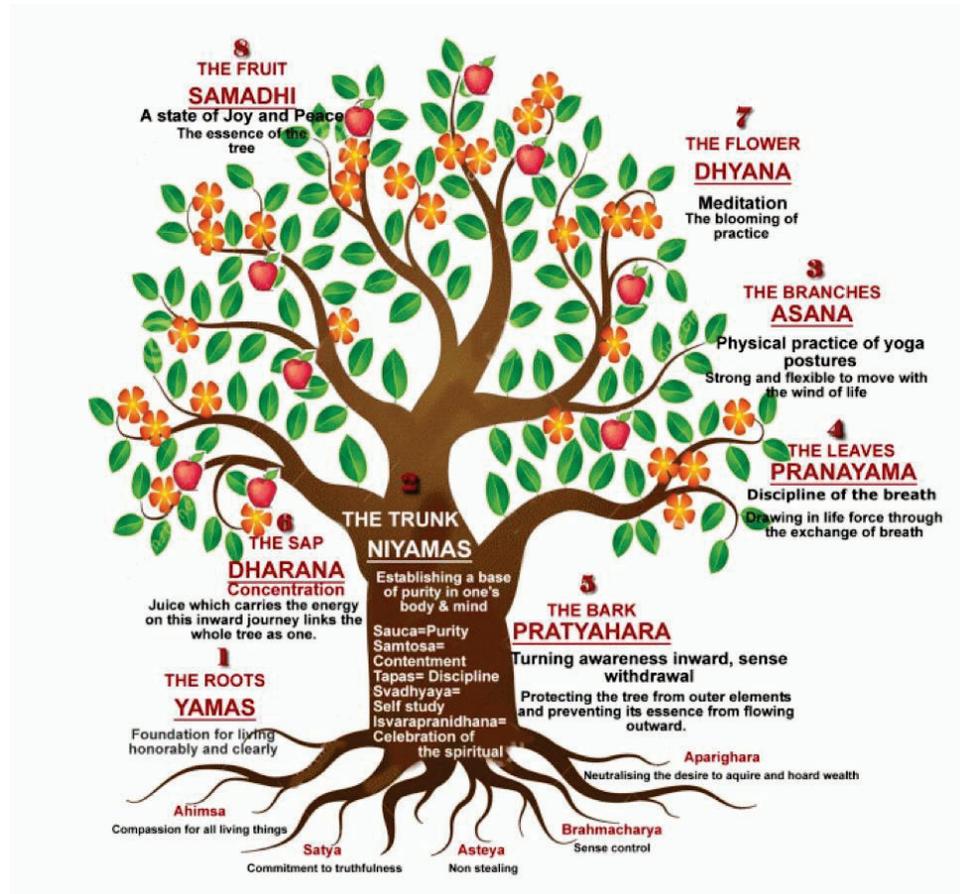
# The 4 Main Paths Of Yoga

- **Raja Yoga** is known as The Royal Path of Yoga, as the Sanskrit word raja literally means “royal.” It is said to be the Yoga of spiritual kings and the yogic path of spiritual evolution and transformation. Essentially, Raja Yoga is a scientific path of physical and mental control with its goal being the experience of enlightenment, self-realization, or samadhi (absorption). The 8 limbs of Raja Yoga (aka Classical Yoga or Ashtanga Yoga) are outlined in *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* and present a lifestyle-based approach to Yoga practice and a practical methodology of developing a sattvic (pure/balanced) mind. Today, Raja Yoga is the most common form of Yoga practiced in the USA, and although meditation is one of the main practices of Raja Yoga, the other steps in the system are important, too. Ultimately, Raja Yoga teaches that deeper meditative states and samadhi cannot be achieved if the body is unstable, the breath is erratic, and the mind wanders. So, Raja yogins would say, “practice and all is coming.”
- **Bhakti Yoga** is known as The Devotional Path of Yoga or as The Yoga of the Heart. In Bhakti Yoga, an object of love or devotion is generally of divine nature, but any form of love in any relationship can be an expression of Bhakti Yoga. It can be your love for God in church/temple, your devotion to a spiritual person such as a guru or a significant other, or even your love for nature or your pet. Bhakti Yoga is the most simple and yet perhaps the most profound yogic path and it is the most commonly practiced form of Yoga practiced in India today. It centers on 9 aspects of formal practice and appeals to spiritual people with an emotional nature and a big heart. Pujas (sacred ceremonies), japa (mantra recitation), kirtan (chanting), dancing, smarenum (remembrance through storytelling), and singing are some of the traditional rituals found in Bhakti Yoga and the teachings of *The Bhagavad Gita* and *The Ramayana* are the essence of the Bhakti practice.

# The 4 Main Paths Of Yoga

- **Karma Yoga** is known as The Selfless Service Path Of Yoga or The Yoga Of Selfless Service. This path centers on selfless action, righteous duty, and the cosmic law of cause and effect. At its essence, Karma Yoga is about love and of giving all aspects of oneself for the benefit of others without expecting anything in return. By devoting one's life to selfless service, the Karma yogin is liberated through their actions and learns to transcend the ego and other humanistic tendencies that divide people. All of that said, Karma Yoga requires considerable commitment, character, and willpower to achieve a genuine state of selflessness and this altruistic path is best suited to those who have an outgoing or worldly nature. Some wonderful past examples of Karma yogins are Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, and Martin Luther King Jr. and one of the best sources for how to practice Karma Yoga is found in the Indian epic, *The Bhagavad Gita*.
- **Jnana Yoga** aka Gyana Yoga is known as The Wisdom-Based Contemplative Path Of Yoga or The Yoga Of The Real. Jnana Yoga explores the subtleties of the human mind through awareness, meditation, and self-study and centers on the pursuit of higher knowledge through contemplation on the Ultimate Reality. In this path of Yoga, which is the most difficult of the yogic paths to follow, ignorance is seen as that which binds us to the cycle of birth and death and is an impediment to Jnana Yoga's ultimate goal of self-realization and samadhi through "no mind." This path is best suited for people with an intellectual inclination and those who actively question the nature of reality. The Jnana yogin uses the mind to inquire into its own nature and examples of Jnana Yoga practices are self-inquiry questions asking "Who am I?" and the practice of neti neti (not that). This is the Yoga of the classical *Vedas* and early *Upanishads*.

# Patanjali's 8 Limbs Of Yoga



As represented and described in B.K.S. Iyengar's book, *Tree Of Yoga*

# Yoga's Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual Approach

PATANJALI'S EIGHT-LIMBED PATH OF YOGA	
LIMB	DESCRIPTION
<b>Yamas</b>	Moral precepts: non-harming, truthfulness, non-stealing, chastity, greedlessness
<b>Niyamas</b>	Qualities to nourish: purity, contentment, austerity (exercise), self-study, devotion to a higher power
<b>Āsana</b>	Postures/movements: A calm, firm steady stance in relation to life
<b>Prāṇāyāma</b>	Breathing exercises: The ability to channel and direct breath and life energy (prana)
<b>Pratyāhāra</b>	Decreased reactivity to sensation: Focusing senses inward; non-reactivity to stimuli
<b>Dhāraṇā</b>	Concentration; unwavering attention, commitment
<b>Dhyāna</b>	Meditation; mindfulness, being attuned to the present moment
<b>Samadhi</b>	Ecstatic union; flow; "in the zone;" spiritual support/connection

Courtesy of Dr. Matthew Taylor, Ph.D., P.T.

# Yoga According to Patanjali's 8 Limbs

## Yoga's Eight Limb Path (Ashtanga) To A Sattvic Mind

- Relationship guidelines (*yamas*): The perfect balance of honesty, kindness, and fairness (simultaneously) and our attitudes toward our outer environment
- Lifestyle guidelines (*niyamas*): Ongoing refinement, reflection, and gratitude/acceptance and our attitudes toward ourselves
- Qualities of the Body: (*asana*) A balance of firmness (*sthira*) with softness (*sukha*) till the sense of body disappears; the practice of body exercises
- Qualities of the Breath: (pranayama) The breath is both long (*dirgha*) and smooth (*sukhma*) allowing the mind to channel consciousness; the practices of breathing exercises
- Correct use of the Senses: (pratyahara) the senses are in control and serve as an instrument of consciousness
- Control of the Mind: (*dharana, dhyana, samadhi*). The mind is consciously focused, relaxed, devoted and detached.; the ability direct the mind and integrate a deeper level of understanding

## Monier-Williams polysemic definitions of Limbs 5-8:

- Pratyahara – drawing back (troops from a battle), retreat, withdrawal, abstraction, dissolution of the
- Dharana – holding, possessing, supporting, bearing, concentration
- Dhyana – appreciate, meditation, attention, contemplation, musing
- Samadhi – trance, concentration of mind, putting together, settlement, joining with, deep concentration, meditation

Information courtesy of Robert Birnberg at [www.longexhale.com](http://www.longexhale.com)